

**NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION
SES CANDIDATE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (SESCDP)
GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES
May 31, 2002**

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(Required by the Office of Personnel Management for Certification/Appointment to the Senior Executive Service)

I. INTRODUCTION

The NASA Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SESCDP) offers individuals a structured approach to preparing for recurring openings in the SES. Designed to meet NASA's projected needs and management values as well as Office of Personnel Management (OPM) merit principles and requirements, this program provides a series of intensive developmental experiences for people who are judged to have high potential for assuming executive responsibilities. These experiences, normally to be completed over a period of 12-18 months, include formal courses and seminars, work assignments, and individual mentoring from current SES members. While the SESCO is expected to be an important source of candidates for SES positions, successful completion of the program does not guarantee selection for such a position.

II. PURPOSES

The SESCO has several purposes:

1. Development of a cadre of highly qualified men and women representative of the diversity of the work force to fill NASA SES positions, which are anticipated to be primarily in engineering and science, and primarily at NASA field centers;
2. Development of each participant's competencies necessary for performance in SES positions;
3. Orientation of participants to the organization and operation of NASA at executive levels; and
4. Broadening each participant's understanding of the NASA programs, missions, values and management issues.

The principal focus of the competency development referred to in item 2 above is the five areas of Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) required by the OPM for appointment to the SES. They are:

1. Leading Change
2. Leading People
3. Results Driven
4. Business Acumen
5. Building Coalitions/Communication

III. NOMINATION AND SELECTION

Eligibility. During the period designated by the SESCDP announcement, applications are accepted from all qualified individuals within the civil service. Applicants must have at least one year of experience in a senior position (GS-14/15 or equivalent). While selections are predominantly made from among GS-15s, applications from outstanding GS-14s are also considered. Any selectees with experience no higher than GS-14 or equivalent are required to participate in more extended development activities.

Selectees who are serving in career or career-type appointments retain the grade, pay, and status of their current positions while completing their developmental assignments. Participation in the SESCDP does not preclude selection for other SES or non-SES positions for which an employee may apply during the program.

Selectees who are serving in other than career or career-type Federal appointments receive an excepted service appointment under Schedule B with a term not to exceed three years. It should be noted that a Schedule B appointment does not confer career tenure. A Schedule B selectee's assignments must be for developmental purposes connected with the SESCDP. Candidates serving under Schedule B appointments may not be used to fill a regular position on a continuing basis.

To be eligible for consideration, applicants must be willing to accept temporary developmental assignments which involve organizational, functional, and/or geographic mobility. Ultimate placement in an SES position may require permanent relocation to a different geographic area. Applicants for the SESCDP therefore must submit a signed Geographic Mobility Agreement with their application.

How to Apply. Interested individuals must submit the following FOUR items:

1. Application for Federal Employment (OF-612) or a Resume providing the information specified below as a **MINIMUM**.
2. Copy of most recent performance appraisal.
3. Applicant Supplementary Statement (attached).
4. Signed Geographical Mobility Agreement (attached).

Minimum information that must be contained in a Resume:

- Vacancy number
- Full name, mailing address, day and evening phone
- Social Security Number
- Citizenship status
- Reinstatement eligibility
- Job series, grade and dates of highest Federal civilian grade held
- Education information for high school and above including school name, city, state, dates attended and date of diploma/degree, major(s), type of degree(s), and credit hours earned
- Work experience in the following format: job title (title, series, and grade if Federal), duties and accomplishments, employer's name and address, supervisor's name and work phone, starting and ending dates, hours per week, and salary
- Indicate if we may contact your current supervisor
- Training, skills, honors, awards, membership in professional/honor societies

For further information on how to apply, please go to the OPM announcement at <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/wfjic/jobs/IG6531.HTM>.

Evaluation and Selection. Applications from qualified NASA installation civil service employees are rated and ranked by local screening panels, using a uniform NASA crediting plan. Applicants from other Federal agencies are rated by panels at Headquarters. Each installation establishes lists of Highly Qualified Candidates at the GS-15 and GS-14 levels. These lists and applications are forwarded to Headquarters. Consolidated lists of Highly Qualified NASA employees and other Federal employees at the GS-15 and GS-14 levels are forwarded to the NASA Executive Resources Board (ERB) for final selection.

Cultural diversity is represented in panel membership to the fullest extent practicable. Panel members may be drawn from other NASA installations or other Federal agencies. In making its selections, the ERB takes into account projected staffing requirements and may consider the availability of high quality SES candidates from other staffing authorities as well as the SESCDP in determining the number and occupational mix of SESCDP selections.

IV. SES CANDIDATE DEVELOPMENT

Mentors. Each SESCDP candidate has a mentor, who is a current member of the NASA SES willing and able to provide continuing advice, guidance, and evaluation. The specific responsibilities of mentors regarding the Individual Development Plan, mid-term, and final program reports, and the annual performance appraisal, are noted in the appropriate sections that follow. The mentor's role is also to provide the ongoing insights, encouragement, and support needed by an individual going through an intensive developmental experience involving significant changes and stresses.

Individual Development Plan (IDP).

The IDP includes sections I, II, and III, which will be utilized for planning to enhance the candidates' five Executive Core Qualifications. The candidates' experiences and accomplishments should be considered as well as the candidates' personal goals. With their mentors, the candidates will prepare a preliminary outline of these sections containing development activities, such as work assignments, training, and education, which they believe they need to attain the competencies required for successful performance in the SES.. As a minimum, the IDP must include the experiences described under Core Activities below. Following an assessment of executive core qualifications which is conducted at the first of two NASA Seminars described below, the candidate and mentor review and revise the preliminary IDP and obtain the concurrence of the appropriate senior management official. The IDP is then reviewed by the NASA Training and Development Division for completeness and compliance with OPM and NASA requirements and is submitted to the Chairperson, ERB for final approval.

The IDP serves as an important guide and measure of progress throughout the program and if circumstances warrant the addition, deletion, or significant modification of planned activities, candidates are encouraged to discuss such changes with their mentors, management, and the NASA Training and Development Division and submit revisions to the ERB for approval.

Core Activities. The following core activities are the **MINIMUM** requirements for successful completion of the SESCDP:

1. **Developmental Work Assignment(s).** Successful completion of either:
 - one developmental work assignment at least 120 days in length; or
 - two developmental work assignments each at least 60 days in length.
2. **Interagency Executive-Level Training.** No less than 80 hours in a formal, approved interagency executive-level training experience. The NASA Training and Development Division informs SESCDP candidates of the approved courses.
3. **NASA Seminars.**
 - A one-week program of orientation and assessment of candidates' executive competencies. The resulting information gained from the assessment is to be used to develop a series of intensive development experiences that will be included in the IDP.
 - A one-week mid-term seminar providing exposure to new concepts, skills and perspectives.
 - The two-week NASA Management Education Program (MEP) or Managing the Influence Process (MIP) is encouraged for SESCDP candidates who have not yet attended.

V. DOCUMENTATION

In addition to preparing an IDP as discussed above, candidates and their mentors are required to submit interim reports for those on an extended program (more than 365 days) and final reports to the NASA Training and Development Division which will be forwarded to the ERB for approval. The Training and Development Division will notify those for whom an interim report will be required. Work assignment supervisors are also required to submit evaluations of the performance of SESCDP candidates temporarily assigned to them for developmental purposes on the completion of those assignments.

These reports should briefly but specifically detail accomplishments toward established objectives and the demonstration of the ability to assume executive responsibilities. Interim reports should emphasize progress in completing planned activities and any experiences or insights which indicate the need for changes in the IDP. The Manager, Leadership and Management Development reviews candidates' interim reports and forwards them to the ERB. Final reports should emphasize the degree of readiness of the candidate for placement in the SES based on the completion of the program and the attainment of executive competencies.

The NASA Training and Development Division staff notifies candidates and mentors when interim reports are to be submitted and requests reports from work assignment supervisors when developmental assignments are completed. Final reports may be submitted any time after all planned activities have been completed. Interim reports are submitted to the NASA Training and Development Division through the appropriate management official. Final reports are submitted to the Agency Executive Personnel Branch (FPE) through the appropriate management chain. FPE will prepare the final packages for ERB and OPM approval.

VI. FUNDING

SESCDP funding is shared by the home organization, the organization(s) hosting developmental assignments, and the NASA Training and Development Division. The home organization continues to pay salary and benefits. Host organizations pay travel and per diem expenses for trips incident to the developmental assignments. The Training and Development Division pays travel and per diem expenses for core activities, including travel to and from NASA Seminars, interagency and other training events, and developmental work assignment(s) at host installation(s).

Per diem authorizations are governed by Federal regulations and NASA policies for geographic areas and duration of travel status.

VII. LEAVE DURING WORK ASSIGNMENTS AT OTHER INSTALLATIONS

Official time and attendance records are maintained at the candidate's home installation, but leave should be requested of and approved by work assignment supervisors during those segments of the program. Per diem is continued during periods of sick leave not exceeding 14 consecutive working days, but is discontinued during periods of annual leave exceeding four hours.

VIII. PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

SESCDP candidates and their supervisors should review their annual performance plans and consider revising them to take into account their SESCDP obligations. Developmental work assignments are appropriately included in performance plans as non-critical elements. In these circumstances, the rating official receives a copy of the work assignment supervisor's evaluation of the SESCDP candidate's performance in that assignment for consideration in making the overall rating.

IX. CERTIFICATION

After the SESCDP candidate has completed the activities set forth in the IDP, the ERB will review the record and decide whether to make a recommendation for certification to the SES Qualification Review Board (QRB), administered by OPM. If the candidate is not recommended by the ERB, participation in the SESCDP is terminated and the candidate is notified, in writing, of the basis for the decision. This (or a candidate's decision to withdraw from the program at any time) does not preclude the candidate from applying directly for SES positions. If the candidate is recommended by the ERB and approved by the QRB, the successful SESCDP graduate is eligible for noncompetitive placement in any SES position for which he or she meets the technical qualifications. (Within NASA, however, the policy is that all career SES entry positions will continue to be competed through the SES vacancy announcement process.)

X. EXECUTIVE CORE QUALIFICATIONS

(Required by the Office of Personnel Management for Certification/Appointment to the Senior Executive Service.)

Future Senior Executive Service (SES) members face special challenges. They must be skilled leaders as well as information managers. Executives will find management information systems and other technological resources invaluable as they tackle strategic planning within their organizations. In addition, executives will play key roles in the new Federal environment of employee/management partnerships.

The law requires that the executive qualifications of each new career appointee to the Senior Executive Service (SES) be certified by an independent Qualifications Review Board based on criteria established by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) describe the leadership skills needed to succeed in the SES; they also reinforce the concept of an "SES corporate culture." This concept holds that the Government needs executives who can provide strategic leadership and whose commitment to public policy and administration transcends their commitment to a specific agency mission or an individual profession.

Executives with a "corporate" view of Government share values that are grounded in the fundamental Government ideals of the Constitution: they embrace the dynamics of American Democracy, an approach to governance that provides a continuing vehicle for change within the Federal Government.

OPM has identified five fundamental executive qualifications. The ECQs were designed to assess executive experience and potential, not technical expertise. They measure whether an individual has the broad executive skills needed to succeed in a variety of SES positions — not whether he or she is the most superior candidate for a particular position. (This latter determination is made by the employing agency.)

Successful performance in the SES requires competence in each ECQ. The ECQs are interdependent; successful executives bring all five to bear when providing service to the Nation.

The basic definition for each ECQ is supplemented by Key Characteristics, which are the activities or behaviors associated with the ECQ. Candidates should use these as guideposts as they describe relevant experience. This experience may be reflected through professional and volunteer work, education and training, awards, and other accomplishments, in addition to Federal Government service. Candidates do not need to address all of the Key Characteristics under each ECQ. The goal is to show an overall record of the knowledges, skills, and abilities needed to succeed in the SES.

Leadership Competencies are the personal and professional attributes that are critical to successful performance in the SES. They are based on extensive research of Government and private sector executives and input from agency Senior Executives and human resources managers. A well prepared ECQ statement reflects the underlying Leadership Competencies (e.g., "Leading Change" reflects creativity and innovation, continual learning, external awareness, etc.) Experience and training that strengthen these Leadership Competencies will enhance a candidate's overall qualifications for the SES.

The five ECQs are:

**ECQ 1 LEADING CHANGE
ECQ 2 LEADING PEOPLE
ECQ 3 RESULTS DRIVEN
ECQ 4 BUSINESS ACUMEN
ECQ 5 BUILDING COALITIONS/COMMUNICATION**

The full text of the ECQs, Key Characteristics and Leadership Competences may be downloaded at <http://www.opm.gov/ses/handbook.html>).

APPLICANT SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENT
NASA SES Candidate Development Program

PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

This information is needed to determine qualifications for the NASA SES Candidate Development Program. The authority to collect this information is PL-93-579. This information may not be disclosed outside NASA except as required by law. The completion of this form is voluntary; however, omission of an item may mean you will not receive full consideration for the NASA SES Candidate Development Program.

This supplementary statement is designed to elicit additional information to assist in the evaluation of your application for the NASA SES Candidate Development Program (SESCDP). Answer each question completely. Be sure to cite specific examples. You may either download the Supplemental Forms and fill them out or you can prepare your responses on plain bond paper.

A Senior Executive must be able to communicate clearly and concisely. You demonstrate your competency in written communication through your application.

Question #1. Provide no more than 2 examples of your most significant achievements that demonstrate your potential to excel in each of the five Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs). It will be most useful to the selection panels if your examples include:

- Activities that describe specifically what you did and the challenges you encountered
- The context, or environment, within which your actions occurred
- The outcomes of your actions (results achieved).

Please limit your response to two pages.

Question #2. What are your objectives and professional goals for the next five years and, if you are selected into this program, how will the SESCO help you achieve your goals?

Please limit your response to one page.

Please put your name on your supplementary statement and sign and date them.

GEOGRAPHIC MOBILITY AGREEMENT

National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Office of Human Resources and Education
Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program

Applicant's Name: _____

PART I: Training and Developmental Assignments

As a Condition of Participation in the Senior Executive Service (SES) Candidate Development Program, I agree to participate in developmental activities (e.g., training, work assignments) that require me to be away from my current duty station. Developmental work assignments may range in length from 60 to 180 days. While urgent personal considerations will be taken into account in formulating the Individual Development Plan, I recognize that it may be necessary, and I agree, to temporarily relocate to refine certain knowledge, skills and abilities or to broaden my background.

PART II: Selection into the Senior Executive Service

Candidates who successfully complete the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program will enter a pool which will be one of the sources for filling new SES vacancies. The success of this program to some extent rests on the geographic mobility of our OPM certified candidates. Therefore, following successful completion of the program, I agree to accept initial appointment in the SES in an appropriate position, should one be offered, at any NASA location.

I have read the above statements and agree to the conditions outlined.

APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____